

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 7770

S E C R E T RABAT 0983

EXDIS (DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS)

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

ALSO FOR NEA - ASST SECY ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SS, MO, SS

SUBJ: PROPOSED ATHERTON VISIT TO MOROCCO AND ALGERIA

REF: SECTO 04103

1. SUMMARY: CERTAIN CURRENT EVENTS SUGGEST TO ME THAT IT WOULD BE BEST TO POSTPONE PROPOSED ATHERTON VISIT. SPECIFICALLY: (A) ARAB LEAGUE SECY GEN RIAD IS JUST BEGINNING MEDIATION EFFORT. ATHERTON VISIT COULD BE SEEN IN SOME QUARTERS AS UNDERCUTTING THIS EFFORT. (B) TODAY'S LOCAL PRESS REPORTS WARM SOVIET RECEPTION FOR PRIMIN OSMAN IN MOSCOW. THIS TENDS TO SUPPORT EARLIER SIGNS THAT MOSCOW IS TRYING TO PUT THE BRAKES ON BOUMEDIENE. ARE THE ALGERIANS ASKING FOR ATHERTON AS COUNTER-PLAY? MAYBE NOT, BUT IT MIGHT BE PRUDENT TO WAIT UNTIL WE HAVE A CLEARER VIEW OF SOVIET ATTITUDE BEFORE ARRANGING ATHERTON VISIT. I SHALL BE HAPPY TO CONTACT GOM RE VISIT BUT SHALL AWAIT YOUR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE DOING SO. END SUMMARY.

2. VERY RECENT EVENTS SUGGEST TO ME THAT PROPOSED ATHERTON VISIT INADVISABLE RPT INADVISABLE AT THIS TIME. REASONS FOLLOW:

A. MAHMOUD RIAD, SECY GEN OF ARAB LEAGUE, PRESENTLY UNDERTAKING  
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SHUTTLE OFFICIALLY DECLARED AS CONCILIATION EFFORT. HE

FIRST VISITED ALGIERS AND IS NOW WITH KING IN FEZ. HE MAY SHUTTLE FURTHER, LIKE EGYPTIAN VP MUBARAK, BUT WE DO NOT KNOW THIS AT MOMENT. (WISH NOTE THAT UNLIKE MUBARAK, RIAD IS EXPERIENCED DIPLOMAT). UNTIL RESULTS OF RIAD MISSION OR LACK THEREOF ARE KNOWN, ANY ACTION ON OUR PART WHICH COULD BE CONSTRUED AS UNDERCUTTING RIAD WOULD SIT BADLY WITH MOST ARABS, AND ESPECIALLY EGYPTIANS.

B. MOROCCAN PRINCE OSMAN CURRENTLY ON WAY BACK FROM SURPRISE (UNOFFICIAL) STOPOVER IN MOSCOW FOLLOWING VISIT TO JAPAN. MOROCCAN PRESS REPORTS VERY FAVORABLE RECEPTION IN USSR PRESAGING IMPROVEMENT IN SOVIET-MOROCCAN RELATIONS. WHILE LOCAL PRESS HARDLY OBJECTIVE, WE NOTE THAT WHAT IT REPORTS IS COMPLETELY IN LINE WITH STATEMENTS SOVIET AND OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS HAVE EXPRESSED DURING MY RECENT FAREWELL CALLS (REPORTED SEPTELS). ALSO IN LINE WITH STATEMENTS OF COMMUNIST LEADER ALI YATA MADE DURING FAREWELL CALL ON ME AT HIS INITIATIVE PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR MOSCOW CP CONGRESS. APPARENT CORDIALITY SHOWN OSMAN DURING HIS MOSCOW VISIT AND OSTENTATIOUS SOVIET INITIATIVE FOR OSMAN TO RETURN FOR OFFICIAL VISIT MUST BE SEEN AS CLEAR SIGNAL FROM MOSCOW TO ALGIERS TO COOL IT. SOVIET STANCE THAT THIS SUGGESTS STRIKES ME AS QUITE PLAUSIBLE REASON FOR ZEGHAR'S URGENT INVITATION TO ATHERTON. I HOPE TO GET MORE ON THIS AFTER OSMAN REPORTS TO KING IN FEZ TODAY OR TOMORROW.

3. IF MY PERCEPTION IS CORRECT THEN BOUMEDIENNE-ZEGHAR MOVE MAY BE A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO HAVE USG HELP GOA OFF THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA ON WHICH IT HAS PLACED ITSELF, AND THREAT OF TURNING TO USSR PRETTY EMPTY AT PRESENT.

4. THIS ALONE NEED NOT INVALIDATE REASONS FOR ATHERTON TRIP IF THERE IS SLIGHTEST CHANCE OF OUR BRINGING ABOUT MOROCCAN ACCEPTANCE OF ANYTHING LIKE THE FORMULA PROPOSED BY ZEGHAR IN REFTEL. IN MY VIEW HOWEVER THIS IS EXCEEDINGLY REMOTE BECAUSE AS WE HAVE REPEATEDLY STATED ZEGHAR'S REFERENDUM FORMULA IS TOTAL NON-STARTER FOR MOROCCANS. REASONS FOR THIS ARE:

A) GOM STANDS ON TUNISIAN-SPONSORED UN RESOLUTION (FOR WHICH USG VOTED) AND UNDER WHICH TRANSFER OF SAHARA FROM SPAIN

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TO MOROCCO AND MAURETANIA IS FAIT ACCOMPLI, ESPECIALLY AFTER FEB 28. FOR GOM TO TAKE ANY OTHER POSITION WOULD REOPEN ENTIRE UN MESS. GOM HAS STATED THIS TO EVERYONE, MOST RECENTLY TO FRENCH EDUCATION MINISTER HARDY WHO STILL IN COUNTRY.

B) KING HAS COMPLETELY UNITED PEOPLE BEHIND HIM ON SAHARA ISSUE. HE DARE NOT TAMPER WITH IT LEST IT TURN SOUR.

C) GREATEST GOM FEAR WAS USSR "ANGOLAIZING" SAHARA. IF SUCH FEAR ASSUAGED BY OSMAN'S VISIT TO MOSCOW, GOM EVEN LESS LIKELY TO REOPEN THE SAHARA FILE.

D) DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF SAHARAN PEOPLE APPEARS TO HAVE DRASTICALLY CHANGED. LAST SPANISH CENSUS REPORTED 74000 INHABITANTS. OF THOSE, SIZABLE NUMBER SEEMS TO HAVE DEPARTED OUT OF FEAR, ENTICEMENT, OR FORCED RECRUITMENT BY ALGERIAN/ POLISARIO FORCES---PROBABLY ALL THREE. SIZABLE NUMBERS OF MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS HAVE ENTERED. AND AS POPULATION IS MOSTLY NOMADIC IT IS EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO TELL WHO IS WHO. UN ENVOY RYDBECK SEEMS TO HAVE COME TO SIMILAR CONCLUSIONS.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

A) I URGE THAT ATHERTON TRIP BE PUT ON ICE UNTIL WE FIND OUT RESULTS OF RIAD MISSION AND UNTIL WE ARE MORE CERTAIN OF MOSCOW EVENTS. AMEMBASSIES ALGIERS, CAIRO AND MOSCOW COULD HELP BUT WE LEAVE IT TO DEPT WHAT TO REPEAT TO THESE POSTS.

B) ENTIRE QUESTION RESTS ON GOA'S WILLINGNESS TO MODIFY ITS REFERENDUM APPROACH. I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER IN LIGHT OSMAN'S MOSCOW VISIT THIS NOW POSSIBLE, BUT OUR INTERVENTION AT THIS TIME COULD MAKE ALGIERS LESS FLEXIBLE IN HOPE WE WILL PULL THEIR CHESTNUTS OUT OF FIRE AFTER MOSCOW HAS PROVEN COOL. IF IN MEANTIME WE HAVE GOTTEN NO CLEAR SIGN OF DEGREE OF ALGERIAN FLEXIBILITY (IF ANY) FROM RIAD, UNDER SEC ROBINSON COULD CASUALLY PROBE THIS WHILE HE IS IN ALGIERS. AS HIS VISIT HAS LONG BEEN PREPARED IT WOULD NOT BE REGARDED IN SAME LIGHT AS ATHERTON'S SUDDEN APPEARANCE. INCIDENTALLY, ATHERTON TRIP WOULD BE REGARDED IN ANY EVENT AS MEDIATION EFFORT AND COINCIDENCE WITH ROBINSON THEREFORE NO COVER.

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C) THEN, IF ONE OF ABOVE INITIATIVES INDICATES SOME ALGERIAN FLEXIBILITY, FOR INSTANCE BACK TO ACCEPTANCE OF JEMAA (LOCAL ASSEMBLY) FORMULA, WHICH GOA SEEMED TO ACCEPT AND THEN REJECT IN PAST, A SPECIAL MISSION BY ATHERTON, OR EVEN BY YOURSELF, COULD BE CONSIDERED WITH BETTER CHANCES OF SUCCESS. I SEE NOTHING TO BE LOST AND MUCH TO BE GAINED BY THIS.

6. IN VIEW OF FOREGOING THOUGHTS, I PLAN TO POSTPONE NOTIFYING GOM ABOUT ATHERTON VISIT PENDING YOUR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.

7. FYI. TO THE EXTENT THAT MY PRESENCE IN MOROCCO BEARS ON ABOVE, HERE ARE MY DEPARTURE PLANS. OBLIGATORY FAREWELL AUDIENCE BY KING REQUESTED PRIOR TO FEAST OF THRONE MARCH 3. HOWEVER, KING HAS TOLD ME HE WISHES ME TO ATTEND FEAST AND

I HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO UNDERSTAND THAT AUDIENCE WOULD TAKE PLACE  
SHORTLY THEREAFTER. AUDIENCE OFFICIALLY TERMINATES MY MISSION  
ACCORDING TO GOM PROTOCOL AND I PLAN TO DEPART MOROCCO ABOUT  
48 HOURS AFTERWARDS. ATHERTON AND ANDERSON FULLY INFORMED.  
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